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SUBJECT: USDA STAGES TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES WORKSHOP
IN OMAN

11. (U) On June 22, the USDA, in association with Oman's Ministry of Agriculture, opened a five-day workshop on the effect of transboundary animal diseases on international trade for over 30 government officials from the Gulf Cooperation Council and Yemen. The seminar, sponsored by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), provided participants with updated information on transboundary diseases affecting the trade of live animals and their products. It covered international standards, risk assessment methods, and best practices to assist in the development and maintenance of science-based trade regulations. The seminar also enabled participants to describe key livestock and poultry diseases that cause non-tariff trade barriers, as well as to discuss approaches for eradicating such diseases.

12. (U) In opening remarks to conference participants, CDA highlighted the importance of having effective regulatory mechanisms in place to protect consumers, domestic agriculture, and the environment from potential outbreaks of animal diseases, especially in the wake of increasingly international food trade. CDA further stressed that it was vital for governments to develop regulatory standards and requirements based on principles of sound science and transparency in order to meet the growing global demand for agricultural products.

13. (SBU) Comment. This workshop will bolster USG efforts to facilitate U.S. animal exports by ensuring that GCC officials understand the importance of transparent, internationally-recognized standards to trade. The benefit can be seen in avoiding a repeat of actions taken by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2006 to block U.S beef shipments to Oman after the USG reported two BSE cases to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). The ban was lifted only after the USG reminded Oman of its WTO, FTA, and OIE commitments with regard to such shipments. End Comment.
FONTENEAU